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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-fifth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 55/38 of 20 November 2000 on the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, by which, inter alia, it called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that had not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, which poses a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation. In addition, it invited all States of the region to address, through various forms of cooperation, problems and threats posed to the region, such as terrorism, international crime and illicit arms transfers, as well as illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which jeopardize the friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society. Furthermore, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

2. In this connection, a note verbale dated 30 April 2001 was sent to all Member States requesting their views. To date, the following Governments have replied: Algeria, Mexico and Sweden (on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union), and their responses are reproduced in chapter II below. Any replies or notifications received subsequently will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

A. Algeria

3. Algeria fully supports the objectives and activities contemplated by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/38 of 20 November 2000, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region". Algeria has always cooperated and participated in all projects and initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, concerted action and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, since this reflects a strategic decision which Algeria intends to implement fully. This attitude is proof of its firm conviction that only a genuine partnership can help to establish an area of stability and security in the Mediterranean region and promote an area of common development and prosperity. It is in this spirit that Algeria has become involved in the process which seeks to establish a framework for renewed partnership.

4. After the Barcelona Conference in November 1995, which laid the foundation for a new relationship between the two sides of the Mediterranean based on partnership and common interests, the mid-term ministerial meeting, held at Palermo, Italy, in June 1998, and the third Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference, held at Stuttgart, Germany, in April 1999, provided a political stimulus to relations in the Euro-Mediterranean area by giving it a comprehensive, balanced and multidimensional approach based on the necessary balance between the three parts of the Barcelona Declaration. As a result of these two conferences, it has been possible to move ahead in the areas of terrorism and the charter for peace and stability in the Mediterranean region. Accordingly, Algeria has spared no effort in helping to consolidate this process and to protect and strengthen it as a fundamental political achievement.

5. Algeria considers that peace and stability in the Mediterranean region are prerequisites for economic and social development. The establishment of confidence-building measures to strengthen peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean region must be based on the implementation of just and lasting solutions to conflicts, respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of disputes and concrete, effective disarmament measures, including, inter alia, the

accession of all States of the region to the multilateral agreements banning nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on Chemical Weapons and the Biological Weapons Convention) and the submission of all their nuclear installations to international monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

6. Transparency in armaments is another valuable tool for creating a climate of confidence in the Mediterranean region. It should also be aimed at preventing the destabilizing accumulation of weapons of all types. Algeria, while recognizing the importance of these objectives, considers that national sovereignty and the right of States to preserve their security and to enjoy undiminished security are also important. Measures to enhance transparency must be consensual, non-discriminatory and complete.

7. Security and stability in the Mediterranean also depend on the conduct of an implacable campaign against the illicit trade in small arms, which exacerbates conflicts and encourages terrorism and transnational crime.

8. The political and security partnership should be based on the littoral States' shared political will to take up common challenges in a spirit of solidarity through respect for the principles enshrined in international law, especially those of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, the non-use of force or the threat of force and respect for sovereignty. This would help to strengthen democracy, consolidate the rule of law and eliminate new types of threats to peace and security, in particular the scourge of terrorism and transnational organized crime. These problems have become so widespread that they have become a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean region, and particularly in the States of the southern shore.

9. Cooperation involving a genuine partnership based on respect for the sovereignty of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the right of every State to choose its own national security system is indispensable for eliminating these scourges.

10. Owing to its transnational character, terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to the security and stability of the region, to State institutions and to the rule of law. For this reason, it requires the sustained coordination and cooperation of all the Mediterranean countries, which must take all necessary steps to eliminate it.

11. International criminality and, in particular, corruption should also receive particular attention, inasmuch as it seriously impedes all the efforts of States to inaugurate their economic take-off. For that reason, at the sixth Conference of Ministers of the Interior of Western Mediterranean Countries, held at Lisbon, Portugal, on 29 and 30 June 2000, Algeria called for reflection on the adoption of a mechanism for combating large-scale corruption. To that end, Algeria expresses its support for the convening of an international conference on this phenomenon.

12. With regard to economic and financial partnership, Algeria stresses the need to reduce development disparities between the two sides of the Mediterranean and, in this connection, calls for a strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDA) financial programme. Algeria also advocates the promotion of foreign direct investment flows and their just and equitable distribution among countries of the region. It considers that economic development institutes are necessary to enhance the progress made by the partner countries of the Mediterranean region in the areas of macroeconomic consolidation and economic transition. Algeria also calls for a review of the debt issue and debt cancellation and relief, for middle-income countries also, and the possibility of debt-equity swaps. Clearly, what is taking place is the establishment of new economic relations and the promotion of a partnership for development. The free-trade area should not be an end in itself but rather a means of achieving the more ambitious objective of creating an area of shared prosperity.

13. With respect to the partnership in social, cultural and human affairs, Algeria considers that there can be no free-trade area, presumably involving the unhampered flow of goods and services, unless the important issue of the movement of persons is taken into consideration.

14. The administrative procedures for issuing visas must be simplified and improved in order to promote movement back and forth across the Mediterranean. In this regard, Algeria welcomes the holding in March 1999 of the first Euro-Mediterranean expert seminar on migration and the movement of persons, particularly as the Ministers for Foreign Affairs reaffirmed the need for follow-up on this important issue at Stuttgart.

15. Algeria is strongly convinced of the importance of the Mediterranean Forum, which provides a useful framework for coordination and dialogue. Owing to its informal nature, this mechanism can make a significant contribution to other regional mechanisms and, in particular, the Barcelona process. It gives member countries an opportunity to consider political and security problems and economic, social and cultural issues in the region.

16. As a result of the latest ministerial meetings, at Palma de Mallorca, Spain, on 6 and 7 April 1998, and Valletta, Malta, on 3 and 4 March 1999, significant progress has been made in addressing issues related to security and stability in the region. For example, a list of measures to prevent and combat terrorism has been adopted, and it has been decided to hold periodic ad hoc meetings to consider this important issue. With regard to the Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability, 11 countries of the Forum, bearing in mind the document submitted by the Presidency of the European Union, have helped to make significant progress towards the development of that instrument.

17. However, this undeniable progress has become fragile owing to the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East and particularly in the occupied territories. This has resulted in the postponement of the adoption of the draft Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Peace and Stability, which had been scheduled to take place during the fourth ministerial conference, held in Marseilles in November 2000, until political circumstances so permit.

18. Within this same framework of cooperation and dialogue in the Mediterranean region, which Algeria has always supported, the fifth Conference of Ministers of the Interior of Western Mediterranean Countries, in which Algeria, France, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia participated, was held in Algiers on 20 and 24 June 1999. The holding, in June 2000, of the sixth Conference at Lisbon and the important decisions taken at this meeting demonstrate the usefulness and value of this framework for coordination, which is another milestone in the effort to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

19. Algeria also welcomes the fact that the Five Plus Five framework for dialogue and cooperation was reactivated at the Lisbon ministerial meeting.

B. Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[7 June 2001]

20. Mexico underscores the importance of paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 55/38, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", in which the States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so are called upon to adhere to the multilaterally negotiated instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

21. In addition, Mexico supports the system of reporting on military expenditures and submitting information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which promotes a climate of enhanced confidence and transparency.

C. Sweden*

[Original: French]
[7 June 2001]

22. The States members of the European Union have supported the consensus on General Assembly resolution 55/38 on the strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The European Union wishes to provide the following common reply on some of the activities realized by the Union aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the said resolution. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta align themselves with the following response by the States members of the European Union to United Nations General Assembly resolution 55/38.

23. The European Union recalls its previous common replies (documents A/50/300 and A/51/230), reaffirms the principal points stated in those documents and adds the information appearing below.

24. The Euro-Mediterranean process, launched after the adoption of the Barcelona Declaration on 28 November 1995, has made a major contribution to the establishment and development of a global partnership between the European Union, its member countries and the 12 Mediterranean partners. A new cooperation scheme has been established, encompassing the

* Submitted on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union.

political, security, economic, sociocultural and human dimensions, which are closely interlinked and interactive. Such cooperation attests to the 27 partners' sense of ownership in relation to this process. Progress continues to be made despite difficult political circumstances. Even so, it has been possible to advance towards the fundamental objectives laid down in the Declaration: the consolidation of peace and stability in the region, the establishment of a zone of shared prosperity and the development of inter-cultural understanding and of exchanges between civil societies. We aspire to create, in this manner, a homogeneous and specific Mediterranean space. The spirit of Barcelona, as manifested in the acceptance, by the 27 partners, of a common value system and common goals, is a reality, but the aims pursued cannot be fully achieved while factors for disintegration or instability persist in the region.

25. The work carried out by the Union in relation to the common strategy for the Mediterranean, adopted by the European Council in June 2000 in Santa Maria da Feira, illustrates the importance which the Union attaches to this area. Through this strategy, which is based on the Barcelona process and the Middle East peace process, the European Union intends to reaffirm its will to develop a comprehensive policy in the Mediterranean on the basis of the positive synergy of its various components, while confirming its commitments towards Eastern and Southern Europe. We share the hope, expressed by the southern partners, that this strategy will give a stronger positive dimension to our policies in the area, enhancing the European role in relation to various Euro-Mediterranean issues.

26. In the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean political dialogue, we keep our Mediterranean partners regularly informed with regard to the establishment of a common security and defence policy based on the conclusions of the Helsinki, Santa Maria da Feira and Nice summits. Our aim is to clear up any mistrust which may arise with regard to the goals and objectives of this new European security and defence policy.

27. The European Union also believes that the first Africa-Europe Summit, held in Cairo in April 2000 under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity and the European Union, can provide very positive contributions to an understanding between the two regions and add new momentum to the development of the Mediterranean agenda.

28. The various Mediterranean dialogues in which the European Union and its member States participate with partners from the south (Mediterranean Forum, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe, among others) have evolved in positive terms. They contribute, indirectly and through a complementary catalytic effect, to the promotion of the aims of the Barcelona process.

29. This combination of factors offers a framework, of which we should take full advantage, for advancing the common Mediterranean agenda and developing its content and projection towards the future. We hope to continue to move towards the implementation of the Barcelona aims and to establish and nurture a Euro-Mediterranean image, reflecting the emerging Euro-Mediterranean identity and its common aspirations as a region.

30. Since the declaration adopted by the European Council at its meeting in Berlin in 1999, the European Union has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the realization of a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, the terms of reference and commitments undertaken at the 1991 Madrid Conference and the Oslo Accords. It is our hope and expectation that the parties to the peace process will agree to resume the negotiations. To this end, the European Union will increase its support for the peace process.

31. In the past year, within the Barcelona process, progress has been attained in the discussion on the Charter for Peace and Stability and in the political dialogue. Progress has also been made in the actions undertaken to advance cooperation in priority sectors such as the economic transition of partner countries, promotion of investment and the building of a free trade area. In addition, the development of the cultural, social and human dimensions referred to in the third chapter of the Declaration gathered new momentum, particularly with respect to social issues. Only by developing the three chapters of the Barcelona Declaration in a coherent and harmonious manner can the region be enabled to act as such on the international stage.

32. In view of the goal of building a Euro-Mediterranean free trade zone by 2010, it will be essential to strengthen economic liberalization among

the partner countries to promote their integration into the world economy. Some encouraging initiatives have already taken place in this regard, and the European Union has provided them with support and assistance.

33. Since the Marseilles Conference, a number of partnership-building initiatives have been taken. A conference of Ministers of Trade and two meetings of Ministers for Foreign Affairs have been scheduled for November 2001 and April 2002. Many seminars and meetings will also be held, such as the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum held recently in Brussels, as well as projects such as the Euro-Mediterranean Observatory for Employment and Vocational Training, which will provide partners with the tools they need to sustain economic transition and attract appropriate levels of foreign investment.

34. We expect the new Meda II regulation, which was adopted on 27 November 2000 and provides for new, more flexible and effective management methods, to bring increased efficiency and transparency to the process. The amount of financing allocated, with the credits made available to partners by the European Investment Bank, reflects the importance the European Union attaches to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the expectations of partner countries.

35. The sociocultural and human dimensions of the Barcelona process will lay the foundations for an area of peace and stability in the Mediterranean. To this end, the dialogue between cultures and civilizations is continuing and efforts are being made to protect the region's common cultural heritage. Currently, an agenda for the areas of justice and internal affairs is being prepared in order to give these areas greater prominence in the implementation of the Barcelona process, involving close coordination between the northern and southern partners. A seminar on access to justice was held in Uppsala, Sweden, from 26 to 28 April, and a meeting of justice and internal affairs officials was held in Montpellier on 5 and 6 June 2001. The aim is to pursue the dialogue on migration, on which one meeting has already been held. Other issues, such as bilateral initiatives undertaken by States, are currently being studied. Considerable attention is also being paid to the integration of women into economic life and initiatives involving young people. We continue to encourage the participation of civil society, and especially of young people, in dialogues aiming to erase mistrust and deep-seated prejudices.

36. As regards the political dimension of the partnership, the European Union believes that significant progress has already been made in the political dialogue, which has enhanced understanding among the 27 partners on every conceivable subject. Within this framework, all parties have expressed and compared their points of view, thereby attaining a better understanding of the problems of the region. The dialogue on terrorism has also taken place within the Barcelona process. Three meetings on this subject were held in 1998, 1999 and 2000. The Ministers, at their meeting in Marseilles, issued a mandate to pursue the dialogue on this problem. In February 2001, a dialogue on human rights was opened at the high-level meetings held under the Barcelona process. The partners have given presentations on their national positions and their efforts to incorporate into their domestic legislation the international treaties which they have adopted and ratified.

37. Although events in the region have made it necessary to postpone the adoption of the Charter for Peace and Stability, negotiations on this subject will resume when political circumstances so permit. The Charter is conceived as a comprehensive approach to stability that does not lose sight of all its political, economic, financial, cultural, social and human components. It is presented as an evolutive framework agreement which is not legally binding and which would serve as a policy instrument for the gradual implementation of the principles set forth in the Barcelona Declaration with respect to the overall issues of peace and stability. Despite the delay in the Charter's adoption, the aim is to pursue the political dialogue in areas such as migration, the movement of persons, human rights and terrorism.

38. The Barcelona Declaration includes in its declaration of principles the promotion of regional security with actions in favour of nuclear, chemical and biological non-proliferation through adherence to and compliance with international arms control and disarmament agreements, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and regional arrangements such as weapon-free zones. The Declaration stated that the parties would pursue a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction; nuclear,

chemical and biological weapons; and their delivery systems.

39. The European Union is convinced that transparency in military issues will induce stability at the regional level. Worldwide transparency in armaments is an important concept for building confidence, and the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an important measure in this respect. The European Union member States believe that every effort should be made to secure the widest possible participation in the Register, including "nil" reports and other relevant information.

40. The European Union calls once more on countries worldwide and in the Mediterranean region to join efforts to achieve the objective of total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. The European Union also believes that the issue of small arms and light weapons is extremely important and recalls its 1998 Joint Action to combat the accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons. The European Union attaches great importance to the success of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held from 9 to 20 July 2001, as well as to the negotiations on this matter in the context of the Protocol to Combat the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms and in other forums.

41. The European Union regards the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament and is committed to the achievement of its universality, as was recently confirmed at the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties. The European Union supports the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, and emphasizes the importance of additional protocols to safeguards agreements with IAEA as an effective measure to prevent nuclear proliferation and foster mutual confidence.

42. The European Union also urges all States to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including in particular those listed in Annex II, whose signature and ratification are necessary for the entry into force of the treaty.

43. The European Union recalls its common position adopted on 17 May 1999 on the need to conclude a legally binding verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention, which the European Union regards as one of the main objectives in the area of non-proliferation.

44. The European Union calls on all States of the Mediterranean region that have not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legally binding instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, in order to strengthen peace and cooperation in the region.